



# News Release

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## **Gypsy moth survey detects fewer moths; tests show all are European variety**

OLYMPIA – Field staff for the state Department of Agriculture detected 33 gypsy moths in nine Western Washington counties during the 2001 summer trapping season. Tests show all were European gypsy moths; good news since females of the European variety are unable to fly – making it easier to control. None were the Asian variety of gypsy moth.

With 22,000 pheromone traps set around the state, the number of moths detected is down from 92 European gypsy moths discovered last year. This year's trapping, which concluded in September, detected 14 gypsy moths in King County, 10 in Lewis County, two each in Island and Snohomish counties, and one each in Kitsap, Pierce, Skagit, Thurston and Whatcom counties.

"If it is determined that a reproducing population of gypsy moths is present, we would make a proposal, probably this month, to eradicate the infestation," said Clinton Campbell, pest program manager for the state Department of Agriculture. Gypsy moths caught in the traps are sent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Otis Plant Protection Center in Massachusetts to confirm the moth variety. Lab results returned last week showed that none of the samples were Asian gypsy moths.

Eight moths were caught in several traps placed in the Crown Hill neighborhood in north Seattle. In addition, in September entomologists located four egg masses and five pupal cases there. The Crown Hill area has been the site of European gypsy moth catches for the last three summers, with three moths caught in 1999 and one in 2000.

About 1,000 traps were set in the Ballard area where control measures were used against Asian gypsy moths in 2000. No gypsy moths were caught there for the second consecutive year. Two years of negative trapping results are required before eradication is declared.

If allowed to spread, this destructive, non-native insect could pose devastating impacts on agricultural, timber and urban areas. Gypsy moths cause millions of dollars of damage in the U.S. each spring by eating the leaves from more than 500 different species of trees and shrubs. The European gypsy moth permanently infests 17 states in the eastern U.S. The Asian gypsy moth is not established in any state, but has been found and successfully eradicated in Washington, Oregon and North Carolina. Because of its ability to fly and its threat to evergreen and deciduous trees, the Asian gypsy moth poses a bigger risk to the environment.

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More than 40 field trappers conducted the annual trapping to detect moth populations by using pheromone traps baited with the scent of the female moth to lure males. During late spring and summer, trappers place, inspect and recover the tent-shaped cardboard traps in urban and rural areas.

The trapping program in Washington has existed since the 1970s and has been successful in detecting gypsy moth infestations that are just beginning. Eradication efforts have prevented the insect from establishing here.

"The program is meeting its mission of keeping the gypsy moth from becoming a permanent resident in Washington," Campbell added. Eradication of gypsy moth infestations prevents economic and environmental losses, either by restrictive quarantines on commodities, or by loss of foliage due to expanding gypsy moth populations.

Residents with questions on the gypsy moth may call the toll-free state Department of Agriculture Gypsy Moth Hotline at 1-800-443-6684.

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